

Merely Players  
Presents

Agatha Christie's  
**Murder on the Orient Express**  
Adapted for the Stage by Ken Ludwig

February 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 25, 2023 at 7:00 pm  
November 19, 26 at 2:00 pm

**Murder on the Orient Express**

**The CAST**  
*(in speaking order)*

Hercule Poirot	Geoff Johnson+
Head Waiter/Michel the Conductor	Charlie Grice+
Colonel Arbuthnot/Samuel Ratchett	Brian Devine+
Mary Debenham	Abby Kubicek
Helen Hubbard	Joy Kilpatrick
Hector MacQueen	Riki Tsethlikai+
Monsieur Bouc	Ian Thomas+
Princess Dragomiroff	Deborah Heath +
Greta Ohlsson	Katie Dittelberger+
Countess Andrenyi	Mohriah James+

## **The CREATIVE TEAM**

Director	Zachary Chiero+
Tech Director/Scenic Designer	Charles Ford+
Light Designers	Kristian Sigloch Charles Ford+
Costume Designer	JoAnn Nevils+
Stage Manager	Samantha Duncan+
Asst. Scenic Designer	Charlie Grice+

## **The CREW**

Light Technician	Jamie Pickering+
Sound Technician	Mick Souder+
Master Carpenter	Michael Lee+
Props Master/Dramaturg/ Box Office Manager	Diane Panelli+
Props Manager	Jessica McCallum
Costume Managers	Hallie Denman Grace Morledge
Ticket Manager	Greta Richter+
Set Construction/Scenic Painting	Jenny Mason Charlie Grice+ Heather Howe+ Mary Lynn Clark+ Abby Kubicek Jamie Pickering+ Marc Arbeeny+ Mick Souder+ Joel Ryan Kristian Sigloch Natalie Cohn+

Jeff Widen  
Elaine Fein

Photographer

Kara Cavalca+

Poster Design

Kate Ishay+/Psyche Digital

Parking Lot Supervision/Concessions/Programs

Heather Howe+

Janet Curry+

Cassandra Owen+

Jessica Jane Harris+

Joe Hutchinson

Katy Schneider

Grace Dendy

Conor Sheehan+

Melissa Mossinghoff

Kristian Sigloch

Ashley Hunt

Mike Rustad

Nora Stafford

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

*There will be one fifteen-minute intermission. DHS Student Gabe Clark and his business, Gabe's Goodies, will be providing concessions.*

Please silence your cell phones; they don't work that well down here anyway.

*We welcome you to take photos/video in the theatre before and after, **but not during**, the performance. If you post photos of the stage, please be sure to credit and tag Merely Players. @merely\_players\_durango*

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. We know that, for many of you, taking performance photos or video of your loved ones is a huge temptation. Please respect this rule of theatre etiquette and resist! Phone use during a show is distracting to actors and audience members, violates our contract, and is disrespectful of our creative property. Live theatre is meant to be temporal – let it be just that. Thank you!

*Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express*, adapted by Ken Ludwig, is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com). It was originally staged by McCarter Theater Center, Princeton, NJ: Emily Mann, Artistic Director; Timothy J. Shields, Managing Director. The production subsequently transferred to Hartford Stage, Hartford, CT: Darko Tresnjak, Artistic Director; Michael Stotts, Managing Director

## WHO'S WHO

**Brian Devine** (*Colonel Arbuthnot/Samuel Ratchett*) is thrilled to return to the stage for his fifth Merely Players production after appearing in *Macbeth*, *Zoom Alice*, and the Studio Series' *Much Ado About Nothing*. The fourth was to be *The Musical Comedy*

*Murders of 1940*, along with much of this fantastic cast before that production was sadly lost. You may have also seen Brian play, let's say, an exaggerated version of himself in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Abridged* at the Durango Arts Center last year. Brian thanks his lovely wife, Melissa for, once again, hiding upstairs to avoid hearing second act spoilers while he was learning his lines.

**Katie Dittelberger** (*Greta Ohlsson*) is delighted to get to play with such an amazing and talented cast and crew. Katie spends her work time lawyering and her free time enjoying beautiful Durango, playing games, reading books to try to keep up with her book club, and laughing and eating good food with her amazing husband, friends, and family. Former roles include her roles with Merely Players as Phoebe in *As You Like It*, multiple characters in *Baskerville*, and Mary Banks in *It's A Wonderful Life*. Other favorite roles are Kit Kat Club Dancer and Lady #1 in *Cabaret*, and the Drowsy Chaperone in *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Katie is a huge Agatha Christie fan and hopes to share her fandom with you as you watch the show!

**Charlie Grice** (*Michel the Conductor/Head Waiter/Asst. Set Designer*) would like to dedicate this performance to the loving memory of Georganne Sugden. Charlie's first foray into the Durango theater scene was with the Merely Players as King Duncan in *Macbeth*. In the summer of 2020, he was part of the "Socially Distant Shakespeare" production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Most recently he played Charles the Wrestler and Corin in *As You Like It*. He was also part of the cast and crew of last year's ill-fated *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940*. For the past two years, he has directed shows at the Durango Arts Center for the *10-Minute Play Festival* and *24hr Theatre*, as well as provided set design and construction for their production of *True West*. In his spare time Charlie is a blacksmith and enjoys writing about himself in the third person.

**Deborah Heath** (*Princess Dragomiroff*) moved to Durango in 2001 with her husband, Bern, and their three children. She has been part of the Merely Players community since 2013 and joined the Board of Directors in 2021. Deborah enjoys both on stage and back stage work. She has stage managed three shows for the company, the latest being *As You Like It* in 2022. She was last seen on stage as Witch 3 in the Merely Players production of *Macbeth* in 2020. She is happy to be back on stage with this creative and talented cast and crew. As always, she is grateful to be part of this dynamic organization whose mission is to provide quality theatre experiences for our region.

**Mohriah James** (*Countess Andrenyi*) loves a good murder mystery, particularly those by Agatha Christie of whose books she owns approximately eighty. Mohriah grew up in Bayfield and graduated from Fort Lewis College with a degree in theatre. Her first time acting onstage was in a murder mystery play her senior year of high school where the audience unknowingly got to choose the killer. More recent credits include Celia in *As You Like It* (Merely Players), Riff Raff in *The Rocky Horror Show* (Durango Arts Center), and Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play* (Durango Theatreworks). Many thanks to everyone involved in this production, and much love to Geoff Johnson for being a wonderful husband and bringing a favorite literary character to life.

**Geoff Johnson** (*Hercule Poirot*) is thrilled to join in on all the sleuthing! He was introduced to Agatha Christie by his wife, Mohriah James, so he is overjoyed to share the stage with her in this production. Recent Merely Players credits include the hammer wielding Agatha Trunchbull in *Matilda the Musical*, the olive munching Yvan in *ART*, and the bumbling Porter in *Macbeth*. Geoff was also seen as Ram's Dad in *Heathers* (Durango Theatreworks) and Austin in *True West* (Durango Arts Center). He is a member of *Devise and Conquer* and frequently joins *Cindy & Mary* to improvise at the DAC. Geoff enjoys reading, card games, and sliding across the laminate flooring in his socks.

**Joy Kilpatrick** (*Helen Hubbard*) is delighted to be back on stage with the Merely Players. A few years back she played one of the Donnas in *Mamma Mia!* Some other local roles have been Ms. Fleming in *Heathers: The Musical* and May in *Fool For Love*. Joy has also worked in TV and film, most recently playing the part of Kevin Kilner's wife in the TV pilot *Badwater*, which was filmed locally in Montezuma County. Aside from performing and spending time out in nature, Joy loves being the drama teacher for Animas High School and the Durango 9R Shared School. She also teaches theatre camps at the DAC during the Summer. Love and gratitude to her family & friends for their continued support!

**Abby Kubicek** (*Mary Debenham*) is excited to be joining her second Merely Players show, this time on stage. Throughout the years she has had a variety of roles both onstage and behind the scenes in South Dakota, Nebraska, Denver, and now Durango. Her favorite role is whichever one she is currently in. Abby would like to thank her husband, Mike, for his support in this fun and wild journey!

**Ian Thomas** (*Monsieur Bouc*) returns to the stage for the first time since *Baskerville* hit the barn! He was sad timing didn't allow for *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940* to make its appearance, but he is overjoyed to be able join the wonderful ensemble in *Murder on the Orient Express* as Monsieur Bouc, a longtime friend to the world famous Detective Poirot. When he isn't on stage, which is most of the time, Ian works as a tile setter in Durango, and enjoys running a Dungeons and Dragons campaign for his friends whenever he can.

**Riki Tsethlikai** (*Hector MacQueen*) is excited to help bring Agatha Christie's classic tale to life. He has performed in many Merely Players productions including Donalbain in *Macbeth*, a prisoner in *Man of La Mancha*, and most recently a big kid in *Matilda the Musical*. Riki is a Durango native who loves to perform. He graduated from Bayfield High School and spent some time studying music performance at the Fort.

**Zachary Chiero** (*Director*) is thrilled and grateful to be making his Merely directorial debut on the Orient Express! After graduating from Muhlenberg College, Zachary has spent the last decade working with many theatres throughout the greater Philadelphia area. He has created three world premiere national tours with Enchantment Theatre Company, where he is currently an associate Artistic Director. He is a proud company member of Tribe of Fools physical theatre company, where he has received Barrymore

nominations for Best Choreography for his work on world premieres *Fly, Eagles Fly* and *Fishtown: A Hipster Noir*. Favorite recent onstage performances include Leo in *The Producers*, Riff in *West Side Story*, Alex in *Buyer and Cellar*, Touchstone in *As You Like It*, and a Clown in *Clown Sex Ed*. Love to Mona, Charles and everyone at Merely. Love always to my husband, Dallas. zacharyjchiero.com.

**Agatha Christie** (*Author*) 1890 -1976 was an English writer known for her 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, particularly those revolving around fictional detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. She also wrote the world's longest-running play, the murder mystery *The Mousetrap*, which has been performed in the West End since 1952. A writer during the "Golden Age of Detective Fiction", Christie has been called the "Queen of Crime". She also wrote six novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. In 1971, she was made a Dame (DBE) by Queen Elizabeth II for her contributions to literature. *Guinness World Records* lists Christie as the best-selling fiction writer of all time, her novels having sold more than two billion copies.

**Mary Lynn Clark** (*Company Manager*) is delighted to be a part of this production. She is a fan of murder mystery books and recently rode many a train, "tube", and taxi in the UK which got her excited about *Murder on the Orient Express*. When Mary Lynn is not working as the company manager (a job she absolutely loves!), she enjoys traveling, walking her dog, and spending quality time with her husband and three amazing kids.

**Hallie Denman** (*Costume Manager*) is ecstatic to be involved with her first Merely Players production. Hallie is an FLC alum, and some of her favorite productions at The Fort include *Gypsy*, *My Favorite Year*, and *Urinetown*. She was most recently seen as a member of the foley team in Durango Theatretworks' production of *A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play*. She is over the moon to be assisting with costumes and working alongside such stellar creatives.

**Samantha Duncan** (*Stage Manager*) is thrilled to stage manage for *Murder on the Orient Express*. She has been involved in technical theatre for twelve years, since she was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and has previously headed *Baskerville*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *Mamma Mia!* When she is not donning her stage manager uniform, you can find her playing Dungeons & Dragons with her friends or in her kitchen playing as a home chef. Samantha is excited to be back in the Durango theatre scene and cannot wait to show the community an exciting and hilarious murder mystery.

**Charles Ford** (*Technical Director and Designer*) is a master backstage technician and the Technical Director of Merely Players. An avid puppeteer, mask-maker, make-up artist, robotics engineer, and special effects designer, he has designed over 100 sets for a variety of theatrical genres and companies. During his career as Durango High School's tech director and resident designer, Charles was the recipient of several awards, including the Durango Foundation of Educational Excellence's Outstanding Teacher Award and the Rocky Mountain Theatre Association Technical Theatre Award. He is the designer and business owner for That Props Guy, as well as a consultant for robotics and technical pursuits. Charles is also our webmaster.

**Ken Ludwig** (*Author*) has had six shows on Broadway, seven in London's West End, and many of his works have become a standard part of the American repertoire. His 28 plays and musicals have been performed in over 30 countries in more than 20 languages and are produced throughout the United States every night of the year. His stage version of *Murder on the Orient Express* was written expressly at the request of the Agatha Christie Estate.

**Jessica McCallum** (*Props Manager*) is super excited to be learning so much about backstage life on this show. She is very thankful for the thriving local theatre scene and the chance to make beautiful art with the Merely Players community. She got to play the giddiest Audrey ever in *As You Like It* in the fall and looks forward to singing and dancing with the extraordinary talent that is the cast of *Bright Star* in the spring. She gets to do creative stuff with teenagers in her day job as a teacher at Animas High School, such as make cool media content (Follow @ahsquillmedia on Instagram!) and organize extemporaneous dance parties.

**Grace Morledge** (*Costume Manager*) is a retired language arts teacher, grandmother, runner, swimmer, writer, Shakespeare aficionado, quiltmaker, and theater lover.

**JoAnn Nevils** (*Costume Designer*) has designed clothing and costumes for many years, from her shop in La Jolla, California to her present Etsy shop, (CoComfortDurango) Most of her theatre work has been with Mona and Charles, both at Durango High School and with Merely Players. Favorite shows include Merely Players' *Mary Poppins*, the steampunk *The Wizard of Oz*, *Shrek the Musical*, and *The Secret Garden*. She hopes to continue stitching and expanding her experiences. Thank you to Mona and Charles and especially to my children, Bucky and Janette, for believing in me.

**Diane Panelli** (*Props Head*) loves murder mysteries!! After college she began working for a company named "Murder Manhattan Style," writing and executing murder mysteries to be played out for corporate parties. After cooking school, various restaurant jobs etc, she moved to Telluride to raise a family and own a restaurant. Then she moved to Durango in 2004 and returned to her love of theatre. Now she goes on mini-adventures looking for V.I.P.'s (very important props) for Merely Players. Such a fun job!! Maybe you have seen her work, maybe you haven't. That's the trick!!

**Jamie Pickering** (*Lights Technician*) After spending so much time behind the light board last season, Jamie decided to step into the bright lights of the stage. After taking a very small part in *As You Like It*, Jamie decided that she prefers to lurk in the shadows of backstage rather than act. When not lurking on the dark side, she spends her days as a professional vampire at the local veterans' clinic. Weekends are spent trying not to trip over her five cats while waiting excitedly for her weekly Dungeons and Dragons game on Sunday afternoons.

**Greta Richter** (*Ticket Manager*) was born and raised in Sierra Madre, not far from Hollywood and Burbank. She grew up enjoying musicals and was excited when her children became involved in theatre when they moved to Durango. Greta loves her work

as Merely Players' Ticket Manager. She is grateful to God for bringing amazing theatre people into her life.

**Kristian Sigloch** (*Light Designer*) is a sound designer and stagehand based out of Durango, CO. Graduating from Fort Lewis College with a BA in Technical Theatre & Design, he has designed for Fort Lewis College, Durango PlayFest, Durango Theatreworks, and the Durango Arts Repertory Theatre. He always enjoys working with students, and hopes to eventually teach Technical Theatre after spending more time in the professional world. Kristian wants to thank his family, friends, and his wife, Ashley, for continuing to inspire him every day.

**Mick Souder** (*Sound Technician*) has been the Sound Board Operator for Merely Players' spring musical productions since 2015 – he enjoys Merely's culture of excellence and gratitude. Prior to that, he was the resident techie for Titanic Players. Based in an Irish pub in Minneapolis, he also directed one of the Titanic plays. Mick has been involved in various aspects of educational/community theatre, radio, and video production since the Nixon Administration.

**Mona Wood-Patterson** (*Artistic Director*) has devoted her professional life to studying, teaching, and making theatre. She has directed somewhere around 150 productions in various venues and presented at educational and theatre conferences both in the United States and abroad. She is grateful that she gets to work and play amidst remarkable people in Durango.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We offer our sincere gratitude to those who helped us with this show. Many hands and kind hearts help us to do our work:

Community Foundation Serving SW Colorado  
Durango Herald  
Jerome Bleger  
Margie Dudley/4 Corners Arts Forum/ KDUR

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Mere words cannot describe how honoured we are by your support. We encourage our audience members to solicit these businesses and to tell the individuals that they are grand!

### **ARTISTIC**

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Sherrod Beall  
Lyndee Beller

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Lillian Boe  
Judy Bolen  
Abby Bowen  
Kip and Nellie Boyd  
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Tracy Brothers  
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Mary Lynn Clark  
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Kim Eisner  
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Mark Franklin  
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Barry and Lyn Goldberg  
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Satoko Harris  
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Deborah Johnson  
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Maureen Keilty

Caitlin Kneller  
James Koenigsfeld  
Darlene Koontz  
Esther Kopf  
Jill Langoni  
Michael Lee  
Deborah List  
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Wendy Ludgewait  
Priscilla Lukens and Tammy Hoier  
Linda Mack and Wynn Berven  
Jan Mayer-Gawlik  
Brian McAleer and Carol Shepard  
Marianne McClain  
Janelle McCallum  
Jessica McCallum  
Dawn McDermond  
Barbara McLachlan  
Ember Michel  
Paula Millar  
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Grace Morledge  
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Stephanie Moran  
Kay Neal  
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Bethiah Crane  
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Gyana Gomar  
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Wendy Joyce-Fenton  
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Diane Panelli

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**MERELY PLAYERS** was founded in 1995 and has been bringing theatre to our community ever since. Our vision is to consistently provide quality theatre in this region, while broadening the range of types of experiences available to local theatergoers through relevant, exciting productions. Merely Players is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and we assure you that any money donated will go toward making quality theatre in Durango both now and in the future.

**Our 2022-2023 MERELY PLAYERS THEATRE SEASON continues:**

*A Compelling and Funny Regional Premiere*

**The Lifespan of a Fact**

March 10 – 19, 2023

*An Exhilarating Bluegrass Musical*

**Bright Star**

May 5 - 21, 2023

**Tickets for both shows are on sale on our website now.**

For more information on Merely Players, to buy tickets, to get involved, or to be added to our mailing list:

Website: <http://www.merelyplayers.org/>

Telephone: 970.749.8585

Email: [merelydirectors@gmail.com](mailto:merelydirectors@gmail.com)

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Technical Director                    Charles Ford+

Company Manager                    Mary Lynn Clark+

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*Merely Players is supported in part by an American Rescue Plan Act grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support general operating expenses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Thank you for spending your time with us. We would love to know what you thought about the play. Drop us an email at [merelydirectors@gmail.com](mailto:merelydirectors@gmail.com) or share with us on Facebook at Merely Players – Durango.

### ***Murder on the Orient Express Backstory:***

\*The novel was first published January 1, 1934 in the UK. When it was published two months later in the USA, the title was changed to *Murder on the Calais Coach*. The novel sold for \$2.00.

\*It was the 10<sup>th</sup> book to feature the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot, who appeared in 33 novels, 1 play and 50 short stories. "

\*The story was partially inspired by Christie's train trips on the Orient Express in 1928 and 1931. During those trips, the train was stopped on tracks due to flooding for 2 days and she met a loud American woman, a "gangster-type" man, and an older Russian woman.

\*It was also inspired by the horrific kidnapping of the Lindberg baby on March 1, 1932.

\* The novel showcases Christie's mastery of suspense and her ability to create a complex web of motives, suspects, and alibis. It was an immediate success and helped to establish Christie as one of the greatest mystery writers of her generation. Over the years, *Murder on the Orient Express* has been adapted for film, television, and stage productions and has become one of the most famous and enduring works of crime fiction.

### **A Note from the Director:**

The story you are about to witness is one of romance and tragedy, primal murder, and the urge for revenge. What better way to spend a pleasant evening together?

These are the words that welcome the audience into the world of Hercule Poirot, the famed detective who appropriately sets the stage for our production of *Murder on the Orient Express*.

While collaborating on the show, the cast, crew and myself were constantly delighted by the razor wit and ineffable charm of Ken Ludwig's script. Many a rehearsal has been interrupted by bouts of side-splitting laughter, for which I mostly blame myself. We pushed heavily into the absurd while creating the group of exceedingly idiosyncratic characters you will meet in the lavish (if not crowded) halls of the iconic train.

But what lies at the center of this play is a tale of grief and redemption, as the master of mystery - Agatha Christie - never allowed us to forget. The circumstances of this story may unfold in an unexpected way; but I have had the absolute pleasure of watching my cast members create and grow into their characters. We hope you'll join them on all the twists and turns the play provides, as you laugh, gasp, and perhaps even shed a tear along the way.

- Zachary Chiero, Director